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THE UNTILLED FIELDS OF PUBLIC HEALTH¹

A SHORT time ago two Yale undergraduates came to my laboratory to consult me in regard to the choice of a career. One of them was a son of a public health administrator of the highest eminence; and they particularly wanted to know something about the field of public health, what it included, what was the nature of the work involved, what were the qualifications required, and what the financial rewards and the more intangible emoluments to be expected by those who might enter upon this career. I told them what I could of the current tendencies which to me seem to make public health one of the most stimulating and attractive openings lying before the college student of the present day; but I found that the answer to their question was by no means a simple one to formulate. The public health movement has been expanding so rapidly that what was "the New Public Health" fifteen years ago includes only the more conventional interests of the present day.

It seemed to me as I talked with these young men that we needed a formulation of current tendencies in the protean field of public health and an outline of the lines of future development so far as they can safely be forecast. It is essential that the worker in this domain of applied science should see clearly the goal toward which he is aiming, however far ahead of the immediate possibilities of the moment it may appear to be. Above all, it is desirable that we should have a definite and inspiring program to lay before the young men and women of the country who hesitate in the choice of a career. On every hand we hear the question, put by an eager young

¹ Address of the vice-president and chairman of Section K—Physiology and Experimental Medicine—St. Louis, January 2, 1920.